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SUBJECT: HUMANITARIAN CONTINGENCY PLANS IN CHAD: LEGAL,
LOGISTIC, AND HUMAN RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

REF: NDJAMENA 97

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SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) The recent expulsion of 13 key NGOs implementing humanitarian assistance programs in Darfur has sparked concern that affected IDPs may consider moving across the border into eastern Chad in order to access established assistance programs targeting the existing population of approximately 250,000 Sudanese refugees hosted in 12 camps along the border. The humanitarian community in Chad is generally skeptical that Darfuri IDPs will decide to move across the border in large numbers in the short term given potential insecurity on the journey and ethnic group composition in the refugee camps in Chad. Nevertheless, UN and NGO actors in Chad have begun preparing for possible emergency scenarios by convening an interagency contingency planning group in Abeche (the humanitarian base of operations in eastern Chad) and building a database of individual organizations' capacities to respond to a sudden influx of refugees. As the lead agency in charge of this exercise, UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) has brought in a Geneva-based planning consultant to get the process started.

¶2. (SBU) In a series of meetings with Ndjamenan-based PRM Refugee Coordinator (RefCoord) several UN and NGO partners made clear that the humanitarian community would be able to provide quick, basic assistance to an inflow of up to 50,000 refugees for one to two months using current food stocks and with existing staff resources. However, a significantly greater number of refugees arriving simultaneously would pose problems for organizations in the region without staff increases and injections of additional money and supplies from donors. One of the most significant constraints on assistance to a possible influx is the reluctance of the GoC to allocate land for new camp sites or to allow expansion of existing camps. UNHCR Chad Country Representative Serge Male told RefCoord that he had no reason to believe the GoC would not honor its commitment to newly arrived refugees under the international agreements it has signed. However, he said the GoC clearly is not enthusiastic about the possibility of welcoming more Sudanese refugees.

¶3. (SBU) Although UNHCR and organizations like ICRC and IRC have the capacity and flexibility to assist with a refugee

influx in the short term, assistance to a large inflow would be impossible to maintain over the medium to long term within the current scope of the humanitarian operation in eastern Chad. Even short term assistance would mean short rations and decreasing assistance to the existing population of Sudanese refugees and Chadian IDPs in the coming year unless stocks were immediately replenished through a significant injection of goods and money by donors like the USG. Given the harsh and logistically difficult environment in eastern Chad, and the reluctance of the GoC to allocate further sites for camps, augmenting the scope of the humanitarian operation in this fashion would certainly be extremely challenging for humanitarians and ultimately very expensive for the international community. END SUMMARY.

MOST HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES SKEPTICAL OF LARGE-SCALE
MOVEMENT IN THE NEAR TERM

14. (SBU) Ndjamena-based Regional Refugee Coordinator held a series of meetings with UN and NGO partners working in eastern Chad to determine the status of contingency planning for a possible inflow of Sudanese refugees. The recent expulsion of 13 key NGOs implementing humanitarian assistance programs in Darfur has sparked concern that affected IDPs would be motivated to cross the border into Chad in order to access assistance programs already targeting the population of approximately 250,000 Sudanese refugees hosted in 12 camps along the border. RefCoord met with ICRC Head of Delegation Catherine Deman March 19; she told RefCoord that based on analysis from ICRC Sudan staff, she considered it unlikely that IDPs in Darfur would cross the border in the near term. In a separate conversation March 17, UNHCR Abeche-based

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Deputy Representative Emmanuel Gignac told RefCoord that UNHCR colleagues in Darfur had seen no sign of IDP preparations to move toward the border. Gignac said he considered major movements unlikely in the next few weeks. In a March 23 meeting with RefCoord, OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) Country Representative Eliane Duthoit said she thought refugees would trickle into Chad slowly in small numbers over the next month, but based on OCHA's analysis she did not anticipate a large and sudden influx from Darfur.

15. (SBU) According to ICRC's analysis of the situation, IDPs are unlikely to be motivated to become refugees in Chad solely on the basis of decreasing assistance in Darfur. IDPs reported to ICRC that they were motivated to stay in place because the ethnic composition of refugee camps in Chad closest to affected IDP camps on the Darfur side was not viewed as suitable. Deman noted that the presence of Sudanese armed forces or JEM in the areas surrounding the various IDP camps might also act as a deterrent. ICRC judged that the GoS was not, at this point, willing to export the issue of displaced Darfuris to Chad, but would prefer to maintain this population within its own borders and so retain a significant amount of leverage over the international community. Deman said the humanitarian community in Chad was moving cautiously in its contingency planning and was unwilling to be too hasty in publicizing its capacity to assist further Darfuri refugees. She reported that many organizations felt that advertising their capacity to provide services which were currently decreasing in Darfur might actually influence IDP decisions to move across the border and act as a pull factor.

16. (SBU) Differing slightly from other agency assessments, International Rescue Committee (IRC) Country Representative Philippe Adapoe reported to RefCoord March 20 that refugees in Oure Cassoni camp had told IRC staff that they expected more refugees to cross the border toward the camp in the coming weeks. Oure Cassoni is the northernmost camp and located only a few kilometers from the JEM stronghold in

Chad. As noted by Adapoe, movement across the border by IDPs in the Zaghawa dominated camps of North Darfur is more likely to be politically motivated and directed by the JEM than influenced by the decrease in assistance in Darfur.

WHAT WE CAN EXPECT FROM THE UN AND NGOS IN EASTERN CHAD

¶7. (SBU) As the UN Agency mandated to assist refugees, UNHCR has taken the lead in coordinating interagency contingency planning in Chad including sending a Geneva-based consultant to Abeche to get the process started. UNHCR has outlined its capacity within the framework of two different scenarios. In the first scenario, the agency could handle an increase in the refugee population of approximately 20% or up to 50,000 refugees if they arrived at several different camps spread out along the border. In fact, a 10-20% increase in population per camp would be the most manageable scenario. In the second scenario, in which up to 50,000 refugees crossed the border at one location, UNHCR would require logistic and financial support from outside its Chad operation. Also within this scenario, if there were an influx of more than 50,000 refugees whether dispersed or concentrated, UNHCR would need to seek additional funding and logistic support from headquarters and ultimately from donors. UNHCR has indicated that it would first seek increased funding using internal UN mechanisms such as the CERF and would make an emergency appeal to donors as a last resort.

¶8. (SBU) Nairobi-based Food For Peace Field Officer (FFP) Dan Suther reports from meetings with World Food Program (WFP) staff that WFP is currently prepositioning quantities of food stocks in eastern Chad in preparation for the rainy season, which begins in May/June. These stocks are intended to support the existing population of Sudanese refugees and Chadian IDPs in the region for the duration of the rainy season when many areas are inaccessible to WFP convoys. However, drawing down the stocks to support new refugees would result in a shortfall in rations unless stocks were immediately replenished. WFP estimates it would need an

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additional 9,000 metric tons of food in order to support a population of 40,000 new refugees for a period of nine months. This would require WFP to take extraordinary measures since the organization would not be able to transport this amount of food through its normal pipeline as quickly as necessary in the event of a new refugee crisis.

¶9. (SBU) ICRC's Deman said her organization would be able to move quickly in coordination with UNHCR to assist new refugees with food rations for a population of up to 30,000 for a period of two months from its own stocks based in Abeche and Goz Beida. Some of this stock is in place and the rest is on its way to Chad from operations in neighboring countries. ICRC has non-food item (NFI) stocks in place for a population of 10,000 and has the capacity to provide water in the short term for 10,000 people. In addition, ICRC has a mobile surgical team based in the Abeche hospital consisting of one surgeon, one anesthetist, one surgery nurse, and a post-operative nurse.

¶10. (SBU) IRC Country Representative Philippe Adapoe and visiting IRC Vice President for International Programs Sue Dwyer told RefCoord that like most organizations in the East, IRC was already operating at full capacity and any refugee influx above 10,000 would require an injection of staff and resources from other operations. In the event of a new refugee crisis, IRC is considering moving some former Darfur team members who were evacuated in the wake of the organization's expulsion to Chad, CAR, and South Sudan operations to assist overburdened staff in those locations. IRC may also place some team members in neighboring

operations in advance of a possible crisis to help with contingency planning.

KEY CONSTRAINTS ON HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE CAPACITY

¶11. (SBU) UNHCR Chad Country Representative Serge Male told RefCoord March 20 that one of the most important constraint affecting assistance to any new Sudanese refugees in Chad would be the reluctance of the GoC to accept them or allocate land for the settlement of new camps or extension of existing camps. The GoC has consistently refused to consider creating any new camps or expanding the current camps. Approximately 10,000 Sudanese refugees crossing the border near Birak in February 2008 was forced to wait at the border for several weeks until UNHCR was able to negotiate GoC acceptance to placing them in existing camps. The majority of the camps in Chad are currently at capacity and would not be able to host a large number of new arrivals without expanding their physical borders or becoming significantly overcrowded.

¶12. (SBU) Based on his meeting with the Minister of the Interior the week of March 17, Male said he had no reason to believe the GoC would not honor its commitment to newly arrived refugees under the international agreements it has signed. However, he said the GoC clearly is not enthusiastic about the possibility of welcoming more Sudanese refugees. Male said that for the time being, UNHCR planned to proceed cautiously in urging the GoC to acknowledge and get ready for a potential refugee inflow. UNHCR is hesitant to press the government to discuss specific topics like possible locations for new camps until there is more evidence of movement from Darfuri IDPs. Male noted that UNHCR would approach the Prime Minister directly on the issue of new camp sites in the event of a large-scale movement into Chad. Other constraints on UN and NGO capacity to respond to a new refugee crisis include a slight depletion of NFIs and shelter supplies used to respond to the arrival of 7,000-8,000 Central African refugees in southern Chad. In addition, the logistic difficulty of providing water in the northernmost camps like Oure Cassoni and Am Nabak would be multiplied with the arrival of many more refugees. Lack of water in eastern Chad is another key constraint on organizations' ability to provide increased assistance quickly.

COMMENT

¶13. (SBU) Although UNHCR and partners like ICRC and IRC do

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have the capacity and flexibility to assist with a refugee influx in the short term, assistance to a large inflow would be impossible to maintain over the medium to long term within the current scope of the humanitarian operation in eastern Chad. Even short-term assistance would mean short rations and decreasing assistance to the existing population of Sudanese refugees and Chadian IDPs along the border in the coming year unless stocks were immediately replenished through a significant injection of goods and money by donors like the USG. Given the harsh and logistically difficult environment in eastern Chad, and the reluctance of the GoC to allocate further sites for camps, augmenting the scope of the humanitarian operation in this fashion would certainly be extremely challenging for humanitarian actors and ultimately very expensive for the international community.

¶14. Minimize Considered

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